

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 19th JANUARY 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe on Wednesday 19th January 2022 at 7.15pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Arun M. Chandran (Chairman)

Councillors Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Jim Atkinson, John Clark, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Mrs. Sandra Haigh, Jed Hillary, Kate Hopper, Andrea Miller, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, and Michael Stead.

OFFICERS

Mr. D. Austin (Town Clerk)

Mrs. T. Woodhead (Finance Manager)

Mrs. S. Stretch (Senior Administrative Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE Councillors Lindsey Aston and Andy Hill.

Members stood to observe a minute's silence in memory of the late Councillor Barbara Clare.

110. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors: Peter Bergg, Dorothy Bowman, Neil Collinson, Phil Hawkins, Wendy Hillary, and John Moore.

111. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

There had been no applications for dispensations.

112. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

113. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no questions from the public

114. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Ken Robson, seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on the 1st December 2021 and the minutes of the meeting of the Special Policy and Resources Committee, held on the 8th December 2021 be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

115. ACCOUNT CONTROL SHEETS

Account Control Sheets for the period 22nd November 2021 to 22nd December 2021 and the General Bank Accounts for November and December 2021 were submitted for approval and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the Account Control Sheets 22nd November 2021 to 22nd December 2021 and the General Bank Accounts for November and December 2021 be received.

116. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

The Town Clerk submitted a report setting out the Grants and Donations requests which had been received since the last meeting.

It was reported that a total of £2,761 is currently available in the 2021/22 Small Grants and Donations Budget, £2,000 in the Youth Council Grants Budget, £9,368 in the COVID Recovery Community Grants Fund and £5,109 in the Community Benefit Fund.

(i) **Shine Community Choir**

A donation request was received from the Shine Community Choir based at St Clare's Church, towards the cost of a post-COVID new start party for the children. The donation would be used to contribute towards the cost of the catering supplies for the party.

It was proposed by Councillor Ken Robson, seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that a donation of £170.00 be awarded to the Shine Community Choir from the General Donations Budget.

(ii) **Woodham Village Community Association**

A grant application was received from Woodham Village Community Association, for £2,000 towards the cost of purchasing computer equipment for a new project "Computers for the Terrified".

Councillors Eddy Adam and Jed Hillary queried whether the use of the COVID Recovery Fund in this instance would be inappropriate.

Following a discussion on the matter, it was proposed by Councillor Carl Robinson, and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:-

- a donation of £2,000 be awarded to the Woodham Village Community Association from the General Donations Budget;
- an agenda item to be added to the next Policy and Resources Committee meeting to consider the transfer funds from the COVID Recovery Fund to top up the Donations Budget.

(iii) A post - grant questionnaire has been received from Neville Community Centre.

RESOLVED – that the information be received.

117. NOTICE OF MOTION

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Michael Stead and seconded by Councillor Andrea Miller:

The previously approved draft 2022/23 Revenue Budget required a precept of £1,743,450 which represented an increase of £45,950 or 2.7% on the current Precept.

The provisional Council Tax Base had increased by 48 properties, and this meant the required increase in the Town Council Tax, provisionally agreed by the Council in October 2021 was 1.99%

Great Aycliffe has one of the highest council tax rates in England. With residents still struggling with the impact of Covid and the added pressure of tax rises and inflationary pressures, now is not the right time to increase council tax.

It is noted that the current draft budget would result in balances and reserves remaining above £1 million next year.

It is proposed that the Council therefore agrees to a 0% council tax increase for the financial year 2022/23.

The £45,950 foregone revenue (based on the draft 2023/23 Revenue Budget) to be funded by reducing the annual £50,000 contribution in the capital reserves in 2022/23.

It is further proposed that the Council further agrees to the following reviews to identify savings:-

- 1. A review of all income generation*
- 2. A review of all spending*

It is also proposed that officers liaising with councillors give consideration to and are cognisant of the issues highlighted in the attached document as part of this motion.

An amendment to the motion was proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary and seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam:

Whilst proposing a freeze in the Council Tax precept for the coming year is aspirational, it is late in the budget setting process for such a proposal to come forward for consideration by the Officers and the Council. The Finance Officer has highlighted a number of significant risks in implementing these proposals. These risks therefore cannot be discounted.

I, Councillor Jed Hillary propose the following amendment to the Notice of Motion at item 8 on the agenda:

- 1. That the Council Tax precept for 2022/23 be confirmed at 1.99% taking account of the risks highlighted by the Finance Officer.*
- 2. That during the course of the 2022/23 a systematic review of all income generation and spending be undertaken with a view to achieving a net zero increase, or a reduction in the Council Tax Precept for 2023/24.*

A vote was taken on the amendment and was passed by a majority vote.

A vote was then taken on the substantive motion and was passed by a majority vote.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:-

1. That the Council Tax precept for 2022/23 be confirmed at 1.99% taking account of the risks highlighted by the Finance Officer.
2. That during the course of the 2022/23 a systematic review of all income generation and spending be undertaken with a view to achieving a net zero increase, or a reduction in the Council Tax Precept for 2023/24.

118. 2021/22 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET POSITION TO 31ST DECEMBER 2021 AND YEAR END OUTTURN FORECAST

The Finance Manager presented a report of the financial position on the Council's approved 2021/22 Revenue and Capital Budget for the nine months to 31st December 2021, along with a forecast of the expected year-end outturn position.

Councillor Eddy Adam thanked the Finance Manager for an excellent report and suggested the COVID Recovery Fund be retained in place until such a time as the Council is fully out of Covid.

Councillor Jed Hillary suggested that for future consideration, the COVID Grants Fund be topped up from any remaining balances on the COVID Recovery Fund in the new financial year.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:

- (i) that members receive the latest financial position on the Council's 2021/22 Revenue and Capital Budgets and the projection of year-end expected outturn.
- (ii) that the following resources be carried forward to 2022/23 from the COVID Recovery Reserve:-
 - a) £25,000 for the Elmfield Site Improvements
 - b) £5,000 for Senior Citizens' Excursions
 - c) £5,000 for Fun in the Parks Event
- (iii) that any remaining balances on the COVID Recovery Reserve be carried forward at the 2021/22-year end, and consideration be given to transferring these to the COVID Grants Fund.

119. 2022/23 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET SETTING REPORT

The Finance Manager submitted a report is to seek approval from Members for the Council's 2022/23 Revenue and Capital Budget to enable the 2022/23 Precept and Town Council Tax to be set at the Council meeting next week.

Councillor Eddy Adam thanked the officers and all staff for their work over the last year and stated that the budget put forward for approval was both prudent and robust.

It was proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam, and seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:

- (i) that members receive the final 2022/23 Revenue and Capital Budget proposals and note the changes made to the draft budget;
- (ii) that members receive the feedback from the 2022/23 Budget Survey;
- (iii) that the Council's 2022/23 Revenue and Capital Budget as set out in the report and the attached appendices are approved;
- (iv) that the 2022/23 Precept be set at £1,746,869 and the proposed increase of 1.99% to the Town Council Tax is approved.

120. UPDATED DRAFT COMMUNITY RECOGNITION AND AWARDS SCHEME

The Town Clerk submitted a report setting out a revised draft Community Recognition and Awards Scheme for the Council.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended:

- (i) that the Community Recognition and Awards Scheme be approved and adopted;
- (ii) that a Local Hero Medal is issued alongside the Community Recognition Award Certificate, where considered appropriate, and financial is made for the purchase of 25 medals per year.
- (iii) that nominations are accepted under the new scheme from the start of the new Mayoral term of office in May.

121. PERSONNEL SUB COMMITTEE VACANCY

No nominations were received to appoint to the vacant position on the Personnel Sub Committee.

Members agreed to leave the position vacant until the Annual General Meeting.

122. AUDIT, RISK AND G.D.P.R SUB COMMITTEE VACANCY

Councillor Eddy Adam was appointed to the vacant position on the Audit, Risk And G.D.P.R Sub Committee.

123. ASSET MANAGEMENT MEMBER WORKING GROUP VACANCY

No nominations were received to appoint to the vacant position on the Asset Management Member Working Group .

Members agreed to leave the position vacant until the Annual General Meeting.

124. SERVICE REVIEW WORKING GROUP VACANCY

No nominations were received to appoint to the vacant position on the Service Review Working Group .

Members agreed to leave the position vacant until the Annual General Meeting.

CHAIRMAN.